

104TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 274

Concerning Burma and the United Nations General Assembly.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 17, 1995

Mr. GILMAN (for himself, Mr. BEREUTER, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, and Mr. BERMAN) introduced the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Concerning Burma and the United Nations General
Assembly.

Whereas the military government of Burma, as a member of the United Nations, is obligated to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all other international human rights standards and conventions to which it is a signatory;

Whereas the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (hereinafter referred to as the “SLORC”) in Burma has refused to recognize the results of the May 1990 elections, which the National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won by a landslide;

Whereas the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in March 1995 unanimously condemned the SLORC’s re-

fusal to “take all necessary steps towards democracy in light of those elections”;

Whereas the United Nations Commission on Human Rights also expressed grave concern about violations of fundamental human rights in Burma, including torture, summary and arbitrary executions, massive use of forced labor including forced portering for the military, abuse of women, political arrests and detentions, restrictions on freedom of expression and association, and oppressive measures directed at ethnic and religious minorities;

Whereas the United Nations Commission on Human Rights noted that most of the 1990 democratically elected representatives have been excluded from the SLORC’s “National Convention” and concluded that the convention does not “appear to constitute the necessary step towards the restoration of democracy,”;

Whereas Burma continues to be one of the world’s leading sites of narcotics production and trafficking and, according to the United States State Department, production of heroin nearly tripled in Burma since the SLORC took power in a violent coup in 1988;

Whereas, according to the State Department’s International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of March 1995, the SLORC’s antinarcotics efforts last year “fell far short of the measures necessary to make serious progress against the drug trade,” and in addition, the SLORC’s lack of control over heroin-producing areas is due to the SLORC’s allowing “wide-ranging, local autonomy (to ethnic armies) in exchange for halting their active insurgencies against Rangoon”;

Whereas the peace agreements signed by the SLORC with ethnic insurgencies since 1989 were supposed to lead to both a decrease in opium production and economic development, but according to the State Department's report, "neither development nor a reduction in opium cultivation has occurred";

Whereas in 1948 when Burma became independent, the annual production of opium was 30 tons, Burma was then a democracy, it exported rice to its neighbors and the world, and it enjoyed a free-market system;

Whereas today Burma is one of the poorest nations in the world and its opium production has increased some 8,000 percent to about 2,575 tons (1992–1993);

Whereas the drug production increase is the consequence in large degree of the inability of the successive military governments in Rangoon to come to terms with the country's ethnic minorities and the refusal of post-1962 military-dominated regimes to permit an open pluralistic society;

Whereas it is primarily through a democratically elected civilian government in Burma, supported by the Burmese people including the ethnic minorities, that Burma can make significant progress in controlling narcotics production and trafficking;

Whereas on July 10, 1995, the SLORC responded to international pressure, including 5 resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly, by releasing Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been held under house arrest for 6 years;

Whereas 16 elected Members of Parliament remain in detention in Burma, along with thousands of other political prisoners, according to Human Rights Watch/Asia, Am-

nesty International, and other human rights monitoring groups;

Whereas in July 1995 the International Committee of the Red Cross (hereinafter referred to as the “ICRC”) closed its office in Burma due to the SLORC’s refusal to agree to allow the ICRC confidential regular access to prisoners;

Whereas the United States ambassador to the United Nations visited Burma in September 1995, met with Aung San Suu Kyi, and also met with leaders of the SLORC and urged them to “choose the path” of “democracy, rather than continued repression and dictatorial control,” and declared that “fundamental change in the United States policy towards Burma would depend on fundamental change in the SLORC’s treatment of the Burmese people; and

Whereas the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Burma, Professor Yozo Yokota, visited the country in October 1995 and will deliver a preliminary report of his findings to the current session of the United Nations General Assembly: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives calls

2 on—

3 (1) the Burmese Government to immediately

4 begin a political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi,

5 other democratic leaders, and representatives of the

6 ethnic minorities to release immediately and uncon-

7 ditionally detained Members of Parliament and other

8 political prisoners, to repeal repressive laws which

1 prohibit freedom of association and expression and
2 the right of citizens to participate freely in the polit-
3 ical life of their country, to resume negotiations with
4 the International Committee of the Red Cross on ac-
5 cess to prisoners, and help control the massive flow
6 of heroin from Burma; and

7 (2) the President, the Secretary of State, and
8 the United States ambassador to the United Nations
9 to actively support and promote a resolution at the
10 upcoming session of the Third Committee of the
11 United Nations General Assembly reiterating the
12 grave concerns of the international community and
13 calling on the SLORC to take concrete, significant
14 steps to fulfill its obligations to guarantee respect to
15 basic human rights and to restore civilian, demo-
16 cratic rule to the people of Burma.

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